



Extracurricular Activities Will Help You Get Into College

by Matt Haldeman

So, if you want to get into a good college, you need to be a straight A student, a world class athlete, an amazing musician, and captain of the debate team. Right? Well, not exactly. True, good grades are crucial and sports can be helpful, but colleges want a diverse student body. In other words, they're looking students who excel in all different areas.

The important thing to show colleges is that you're intelligent, a hard worker and you're passionate about something. But too many high school juniors and seniors think that they have only a handful of options when deciding what that something is going to be. That's just not true. There are literally hundreds of options out there if you know the right places to look.

Below you'll find a few ideas you might not have thought about. If you take ten minutes and think about it, I bet you'll be able to double my list. The important thing is to choose something you're passionate about and not choose something because you think it'll look good on a transcript.

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES. There is seemingly no end to the number of non-profit organizations that are looking for people to help. Whatever cause you're passionate about, chances are there's someone who's working on it, and could use an extra hand. You can tutor struggling students, be a mentor, build houses, work at a food kitchen, and much more. There may even be someone at school that could let you know what options are available. Youth centers and churches, synagogues, or other places of worship are also likely to have the information you're looking for.

IN-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES. There could easily be great options inside your own school, but you won't know unless you ask. There are the traditional options: athletics, theater, community service, debate, yearbook, school newspaper, but there easily could be many more. Maybe the chemistry teacher needs someone to help him out with experiments after school. Maybe some struggling students are looking for tutors. Ask around: you might be surprised by what you find.

LEARN A SKILL. You don't have to be an expert at something to have it count as an extracurricular activity. Have you always wanted to learn French, or take karate? Maybe you played a little piano in grade school and you'd like to pick it up again. Go for it. It's never too late to learn a new trick or two.

GET A JOB. Having a job shows colleges that you're trustworthy, dependable, and that you can balance work and school. But you should be picky about the job you choose. Try and find something you can do that demonstrates a skill you have. Jobs like being a sales clerk or a cashier aren't going to be as impressive as something like Little League baseball coach. Think about your own skill set and what kinds of services you can provide.

INVENT YOUR OWN. If there's something you really would like to do, but you no one's doing, start it up yourself. Colleges love students who take initiative. Start up a baby-sitting business. Start a canned food drive for a homeless shelter. Organize a theater group or a band at your school.

Extracurricular activities aren't miracle cures for bad grades or poor test scores. Nobody's saying that those things aren't important to colleges. But colleges do look beyond the numbers. They want to see who you really are and your extra curricular activities are a good way of showing them.

However, don't try to do a little of everything, just because you think that's what colleges want to see. College admissions officers are pros at spotting people who load up on extracurricular activities so they can put them on their transcripts. Pick a few things and do them really well.

Ultimately, the activities you choose should be ones you enjoy and are passionate about. Choose something you would do even if it didn't look good on a transcript. Remember: the point is to show colleges what you're really like, not to try and be someone you're not.